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## V.—DESULTORY REMARKS ON LATIN PRONUNCIATION.

Have mere desultory remarks any claim to publication? Perhaps these may help some teacher whose only idea of advanced study is the pleasant sport of conjectural emendation and who therefore finds himself at a loss when a student demands of him a useful subject for research.

They are suggested by three books: Bridges' *Ibant Obscuri*, Clark's *Cursus in Vulgar Latin*, Hardie's *Res Metrica*. The Poet Laureate has made us all see, as we never saw before, the task of the Roman pioneers in quantitative metre. Livius knew instinctively the quantity of a Greek, the stress-accent of a Latin syllable. To write quantitative Greek and accentual Latin verse was easy for him. But quantitative Latin verse! There was the rub. If Roman literature had so thoroughly been captured as Horace avers by captured Greece, Greek rules of prosody would have been rigorously imposed, there and then, on Latin verse. But the earliest Roman poets were too independent to tolerate that. Hardie's brilliant chapter on the History of Metre at Rome shews us how long it was before Latin verse came to shew 'very little that the strictest Hellenist could call licence or irregularity.' And Clark's discovery that the clausula-rhythm in informal prose—Cicero's letters to Atticus, Petronius' novel—followed accent, not quantity, makes us think of a pronunciation like *dabūnt*, *volūptatem*, *vidēs*, *nesciō*, and possibly of any and every unaccented syllable 'long by position,' as an utterance that required some conscious effort from an educated Roman. It was not wholly natural and instinctive to him, but something resembling, perhaps remotely, the artificial pronunciation in English verse of the noun 'wind' so as to rhyme with 'kind.' If Clark is right in saying that Cicero used a quantitative clausula in one letter, an accentual in another, one of Hardie's arguments against the accentual theory of Saturnians is weakened. Hardie finds it difficult to believe that *dabunt malum* (followed by a consonant) could be treated by the same poet as *dābunt mālum* (in Saturnian verse) and as *dābūnt mālūm* (in verse of the Greek pattern). 'Could the same material be treated so differently by the same poet at the same time?' But,

I confess, I should like to see this 'accentual clausula' of Cicero more fully treated. If the Oxford professor has not time to spare, will he find a lieutenant? For one cannot help feeling that the nature of the Latin accent, its restriction to the penult or the antepenultimate syllable, would give great opportunity to an appearance, a deceptive appearance, of a *cursus*. Sudhaus convinced himself that Plautus' *cantica* were dance-metres two steps forward and two steps backward—, because he could find in very many lines (and alas! tried to find in all) multiples of four *metra*. But he forgot<sup>1</sup> that the song-metres which literary tradition had transmitted to Plautus were usually tetrameters or dimeters, hardly ever trimeters. He never asked himself the question: What chance was there of non-observance of this supposed rule?

At any rate the introduction of the Greek type of metre was an innovation. Even Hardie, who finds in Saturnians quantitative metre, cannot find there the same kind of quantitative metre as the Greek. And his remark (apparently so obvious, yet never, I think, so convincingly put) that the Latin stress-accent gave an iambic rhythm which satisfied the Roman ear (not the Greek) to a line like:

labórans, quaérens, párcens, illi sérviens,

adds force to the statement (challenged by the Latin scholars of France) that Plautus and Terence paid some regard to accent as well as to quantity. 'The Latin accent,' says Hardie (p. 88) 'was not a strong enough stress to enable a short syllable to take the place of a long, but when two or three longs came together it differentiated them.' My 'Early Latin Verse' will, I hope, convince everyone that the admission of spondees to the second and fourth feet of the Senarius was, for a Roman, an improvement of the Greek form. It brought the verse of dialogue nearer the tone of talk without sacrificing anything essential. Also that the Law of Breves Breviantes is an imposing (and repellent) name for the characteristic slurred pronunciation of

<sup>1</sup> We have all said such hard things about Sudhaus' perverse defence of an impossible text (in his *Aetna*) and his Procrustean scansion of Plautus that I felt remorse when I learned lately from an obituary notice the difficulties of his life that drove him to over-hasty publication. And yet, it was not the man we censured, but his method.

everyday life at Rome. Our slurring takes the form of syncope: 'what's this?' 'I'd know'; the Roman shortened an unaccented syllable after a short syllable: *quid ěst hoc?* or *quid hĥc est?*, *volĥ scire*. In Latin comedy (presumably even of the Augustan age) these colloquial pronunciations were naturally most in evidence, though some of them had so thoroughly driven the literary pronunciation off the field that they get Virgil's sanction: *vidĕn ut geminae stent vertice cristae*. (No syllable should by rule be longer than *dĕs* + *n*.) It is not true to say that Ennius admitted to his epic no shortening but of a final vowel. We find *enĭm r-* in one extant line:

non enim rumores ponebāt ante salutem,

and I fancy there were plenty of examples like this (and possibly like *apŭd Cumas*) in the lines that are not extant. That a comedian, above all a jolly soul like Plautus, would allow bizarre artificial pronunciations of words or phrases to pervade his plays is so impossible that I have always thought it a waste of time to collect proof that his *quid ěst hoc*, his *volŭptatem*, Terence's *ex Graecis bonis*, echoed actual everyday utterance. Some Plautine scholars insist that, if *bonis* in this sentence (where the word has sarcastic emphasis) were pronounced *bonĭs*, it must have been always a pyrrhic, that *volŭptatem* in Virgil proves the unreality of *volŭptatem* in Plautus. But that is the same as to assert that 'what is this?' in Milton proves the unreality of 'what's this?' in Shakespeare. Is it worth arguing with people who assert such things? The only suitable argument is banter. One should not hurt people's feelings, but I cannot refrain from quoting this sentence from an Irish journal. It is so deliciously Irish: 'Perhaps then to an ancient poet [I think he means Plautus] it may have been a boon to strip a word at once of its work-a-day air by chanting it to another and a stranger cadence.'

What theory do my critics (at least in Germany) prefer to mine? They maintain that the shortening is due to the ictus of the line. *Ex Graecis bonis* is the result of the short syllable *bo* being 'under the ictus.' In other words, Terence wrote down the sentence (not verse): *ex Graecis bonis Latinas fecit non bonas*, and found that an ictus fell on the short syllable *bo*-. That satisfied him; the line would scan; for *bonĭs* would in these circumstances become *bonĭs*. (Presumably if the ictus

had 'happened' to fall on *La-*, the fourth word would have become *Latinas*!) To them the difference between *ad istam vallem*, *ad illam vallem* on the one hand, and *ad istam vallem*, *ad illam vallem* on the other, is that *ad* stands 'under the ictus' in the first type, but not in the second. To me the difference is that the pronoun is a sentence-enclitic in the first. And here is a subject for a dissertation: Collect all examples of *ille*, *iste* after a short preposition or pronoun in the dialogue of Plautus and Terence and see whether there is a single example of shortening when *ille*, *iste* has any emphasis (e. g. 'to *that* valley, but not to this'). In a phrase like *ad illam vallem* both *ad* and *illam* would usually be sentence-enclitics (the first of the pair taking a secondary accent). Plautus' *ad illam vallem* reappears in the Romance languages (Ital. *alla valle*) and was presumably the natural pronunciation for a Roman at all times.

It is unlucky that Commodian's poems have been preserved in one manuscript only, a Verona transcript, I think (now in two parts), of a volume that passed from Cassiodore's library at Vivarium to Bobbio. Still it is in transcripts from an exemplar in unfamiliar minuscule that there is most likelihood of error, and probably the traditional text is sound enough. Here too there is opportunity for useful research. Examine Commodian's rude hexameter in the light of Plautine scansion on the one hand and of Romance philology on the other. Is it a faithful reflection of the unconventional Latin of the time or did Commodian '*ut versum faceret*' (to quote Cicero's phrase) do violence to the language, in his re-action against the artificial rules of the 'correct' poets who wrote for the educated classes?

Hardie speaks (p. 217) of the 'high degree of . . . artificiality' in the *novi poetae*. One usage of Catullus on which I should like to see a dissertation is the Greek usage of lengthening a final short vowel before an initial consonant group. Even if there were a certain example in previous Latin poetry I would still call it a Greek usage, but the isolation of Ennius' *stabilitā scamna* (Ann. 96), in contrast with the persistent short scansion by all the old poets, makes one doubt the reading. Certainly every one will allow that Catullus' *impotentīā freta* is quite Greek and un-Roman, even if opinions differ about his *nullā spes*. Was it Catullus (and his friends) who first imposed this Greek prosody on Roman verse? And do the other great poets bind

themselves to the Greek chariot wheel in his slavish fashion? Will not some one sift out the 'Greek' licences of Virgil (e. g. *Actaeō Aracintho*) from the genuine Roman usages (e. g. *an qui amant*)? No doubt, there are already books and articles and lists of statistics, but no intelligent treatment (so far as I know) of the gradual invasion of Roman poetry by Greek prosody, the traitors who admitted the alien, the patriots who repelled him.

Finally, a remark so desultory as to over-leap the scope of this paper. Will not some one undertake a full history of the *novi poetae*, of that wonderful transformation of Roman poetry by a professor and his pupils, that Celtic (yes, Celtic) movement that prepared a way for Virgil? Valerius Cato's *Lydia* and *Dirae* (the first Roman imitations of Theocritus) the *Ciris* (by Gallus or by Virgil and Gallus), the *Culex* (young Virgil's fairy-tale to amuse a very youthful prince) and the poems of Virgil's student days, all would claim a place.

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